

MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

Success Stories from the Field

Vital Signs Inc

New Jersey Manufacturing Extension Program

NJMEP Assists Vital Signs on the Road to Lean Transformation

Client Profile:

Vital Signs of Totowa, New Jersey designs, manufactures and markets single-use medical products for the anesthesia, respiratory, critical care, sleep therapy and medical emergency markets. Originally founded in 1972 in New York, the company reincorporated in New Jersey in 1988. Its corporate offices and main manufacturing facility are located in Totowa, while additional manufacturing and warehousing facilities are in Pennsylvania, Minnesota and Colorado, and subsidiaries exist in Maryland, Sweden and the United Kingdom. The Totowa location employs approximately 300 people.

Situation:

The idea for contacting the New Jersey Manufacturing Extension Program (NJMEP), a NIST MEP network affiliate, arose at a management meeting following the success of Lean implementation at Vital Signs' Pennsylvania plant. David Najjar, Director of Manufacturing Operations, and NJMEP Field Agent Dorothy Repka scheduled an initial meeting at which they discussed the company's goals. These included reducing process time, improving customer satisfaction, reducing waste, increasing profitability, and expanding the skill set and involvement of employees.

Solution:

As Vital Signs began their Lean journey, management desired grant assistance to meet its growing needs. Repka and Najjar worked together to obtain a New Jersey Competitive Workforce Development Grant, while also initiating pre-grant Lean Workshop and Value Stream Mapping (VSM) projects. NJMEP structured a phased approach comprising a Lean Workshop with Live Simulation for managers and leads, followed by a VSM of Vital Signs' returns process, including both shop floor and office loops. This training lasted about six weeks and resulted in reduced processing of returned goods and the elimination of duplications and delays that were inherent in the former processing procedure. Customers were satisfied by the resulting increased responsiveness, viewing the ability to resolve a return and process the necessary accounting within the same billing period as a distinct advantage.

Results:

- * Reduced rework product processing from 2.8 days to 1.1 days.
- * Reduced information flow period between customer service and customer from 10 days to 2 1/2 days.
- * Invested \$160,000 in workforce training.

Testimonial:

"The added value from these classes was in supporting the ongoing commitment to evaluate, identify and challenge our processes. The assemblers and staff learned that there are always better ways to organize work areas and minimize waste. We need to constantly challenge the way we do things to

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remain competitive. NJMEP is helping us to do that."
David Najjar, Director of Manufacturing Operations